Retention in Research Administration

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1

Introduction

Background of the Study

Background

- Why?
  - Turnover
  - Lack of literature/research
  - RA as a field
  - Options
- Who/What/How/When/Where?
  - Research administrators worldwide
  - Fall 2023 survey
  - RESADM listserv, NCURA/SRAI discussion boards

Retention Factors

How the Retention Factors Were Chosen

- Disclaimer: NO SALARY OR FRINGE BENEFITS WERE INCLUDED
- Previous studies in Research Administration
  - Welch & Brantmeier
  - Zink, Hughes, and Vanderford
  - Shambrook & Roberts
- Studies on retention in other fields
- Experience

Which Retention Factors Were Included

Retention Strategy	Category
Free meals	Physical needs
Time to exercise	Physical needs
Free gym access	Physical needs
Team building activities	Connection to the work/organization
Supportive administration	Connection to the work/organization
Professional development	Connection to the work/organization
Training opportunities	Connection to the work/organization
Rewards/recognition	Connection to the work/organization
Interesting/engaging duties	Connection to the work/organization
More involvement in org	Connection to the work/organization
Clear promotion path	Connection to the work/organization
Fully remote	Flexibility
Fully in person	Flexibility
Hybrid	Flexibility
Flex hours	Flexibility
Private offices	Facilities
Upgraded facilities	Facilities
Upgraded equipment	Facilities

Results of the Study

Profile of a Research Administrator

- Shifts in "typical" Research Administrator since Shambrook & Roberts 2011 profile

RASPerS 2010			Retention in Research Administration 2023		
Gender					
	2010 Frequency			Frequency	2023
Male	228	20.0%	Male	60	12.53%
Female	915	80.0%	Female	413	86.22%
N/A			Non-Binary	6	1.25%
Totals	1143			479	
Age					
2010					2023
N/A			18-24	1	0.21%
<30	87	7.6%	25-34	43	8.98%
30-39	266	23.2%	35-44	151	31.52%
40-49	365	31.9%	45-54	162	33.82%
50-59	331	28.9%	55+	122	25.47%
60+	96	8.4%	N/A		
Totals	1138			479	
Education					
2010					2023
High School or GED	7	0.6%	N/A		
Some college credit	90	7.9%	N/A		
Associate's degree	31	2.7%	Associate's degree	26	5.43%
Bachelor's degree	475	41.4%	Bachelor's degree	159	33.19%
Master's degree	428	37.3%	Master's degree	250	52.19%
Doctoral degree	115	10.0%	Doctoral degree	44	9.19%
Totals	1146			479	
Experience in Research Administration (in years)					
2010					2023
<1	27	23.0%	N/A		
1<5	288	25.1%	0-5	100	20.88%
5<10	305	26.5%	6-10	110	22.96%
10<20	353	30.7%	11-15	104	21.71%
20+	178	15.3%	16+	165	34.45%
Totals	1149			479	

Overall Results

	Free meals		Time to exercise	Free gym access	Team building activities	Supportive administration	Professional development	Training opportunities	Rewards/recognition	Interesting/engaging duties	More involvement in org	Clear promotion path	Fully remote	Fully in person	Hybrid	Flex hours	Private offices	Upgraded facilities	Upgraded equipment	
Overall	1.5		2.58	2.37	2.43	4.3	4.1	4.1	3.67	4.14	2.92	4.21	3.8	1.37	3.09	4.26	3.09	2.62	3.49	

- 479 complete responses
- High and low scores
- Almost NO difference in various demographics

Open-Ended Responses

- "Not considering salary, if you were tempted to take a position at a different organization, what would be the one (1) factor that would make you stay with your current employer?"
- Assimilated responses with survey factors, then coded into similar categories
- Some respondents wrote in more than one response (709 total responses)

All Retention Factors	N
Fully remote	126
Supportive administration	82
Culture	72
Benefits	65
Clear promotion path	60
Flex hours	58
Staff	46
Pay	34
Professional development	21
Hybrid	20
More involvement in org	16
Interesting/engaging duties	13
Loyalty	12
Work/Life balance	9
Reorganization/Mgmt change	9
Moving	8
Autonomy	8
Training opportunities	8
Institutional Knowledge	7
Rewards/recognition	6
Security	5
Organizational reputation	5
Upgraded facilities	5
Upgraded equipment	5
N/A	4
Spouse	3
Time to exercise	1
Private offices	1
Free meals	0
Free gym access	0
Team building activities	0
Fully in person	0

Seeking Alternative Employment

- "Are you currently seeking alternative employment?"
  - "Are you seeking alternative employment outside of Research Administration?"
  - "Please briefly explain why."
- 127 (26.5% overall) answered Yes to seeking alternative employment
- 37 (7.7% overall) looking outside of RA
- Some respondents wrote in more than one response for why they're leaving RA

Reasons for Leaving Research Administration	Frequency
Lack of support/resources	13
Unrealistic demands/responsibilities	13
Burnout	8
More pay	8
Open to other options	7
Lack of work life balance	7
Lack of promotion path	5
Lack of stability (leadership)	4
Lack of staff	4
New challenge	3
Deadlines	2
Unstable work flow	2
Remote	2
Lack of creative expression/follow passion	2
Recognition	2
Still new	1

Major Conclusions of the Study

General Conclusions

- Recruitment efforts desperately need to be expanded to diversify and reinforce the field
- Research Administrators care more about connecting to their work than having physical needs/wants met
- RAs generally do not want to leave the field

- So how can we use this to guide our efforts??

Discussion

Further Discussion Options

- Additional conclusions?
- What are additional roadblocks, and how can we get over them?
- Further studies (GRANTED projects)
- What have you tried?
  - What has worked?
  - What hasn't worked?

Referring to the Study

- https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/gs_caps/11/
- Recommended Citation
  - Alongi, Kelly. "Retention in Research Administration." (Spring 2024).